

CONCILIATION COURT FACT SHEET

What is Conciliation Court?

Conciliation Court is a part of the court system that provides families an opportunity to work out their family disputes in a less costly and less formal forum than a courtroom. Divorce has become a major threat to mental health for children, and the court recognizes that everyone will benefit if divorcing parents can keep their conflict out of their children's lives. Conciliation Court has four parts:

Parent Information Class: The 3-hour class, which is held in the evenings at the Guidance Center, focuses on helping parents recognize the needs of children whose parents are going through a divorce and provides information and tools on how to work with your (ex-)spouse to avoid harming your children. The class also prepares the parties for mediation.

Mediation: Mediation sessions are conducted by a professionally trained family therapist/mediator who works with the couple to jointly develop a parenting plan, which focuses on the best interest of the child(ren).

Counseling: Counseling is available for couples, or one partner individually, if either or both are interested.

Custody Evaluation: While most couples are able to arrange a parenting plan through mediation, some are not able to because there has been so much conflict or there has been some sort of abuse in the relationship. In those cases, the Judge may order a mental health professional to do an evaluation of the parents, the children, and other people directly associated with the family with the goal of making a recommendation to the Judge as to a workable custody arrangement.

Who is Conciliation Court for?

By law, any parents with a custody dispute over minor children must go through Conciliation Court. If a couple or individual without minor children wants to use Conciliation Court services, they may request permission from the court to do so by filing a petition with the Court. However, the court will not order a reluctant party into Conciliation Court if there are no minor children.

How do I request (petition) that my case be transferred to Conciliation Court?

The Law Library and Self-Help Center has forms and instructions in a packet called *Conciliation Court*. Complete the forms and return them to the Clerk's Office in the Coconino County Courthouse at 200 North San Francisco, Flagstaff, AZ 86001. Be sure to keep a copy of the completed forms for your records.

What Conciliation Court services can I use if I do not have a case filed with the court?

Counseling services are available in Conciliation Court for people who do not have a case filed with the court. In addition, either parent or both parents may also choose to attend the parent information class and pay the \$40 fee.

What will happen after I petition the court to have my case transferred to Conciliation Court?

Within a few weeks, the judge will review your petition and sign an Order to Conciliation Court. The Guidance Center will notify you about the date for your parent information class and/or counseling session. The Guidance Center will continue to manage your case while it is in Conciliation Court.

How long will I be in Conciliation Court?

If your case is mediated, then your case will probably be in Conciliation Court for three months. However, if your case requires a custody evaluation, it could take another four to five months.

What is the cost?

There is no additional cost for Conciliation Court services, except for the parent information class, which costs \$40 per person.

What if my spouse or I live outside of Coconino County?

If one party lives outside of Coconino County and the distance prohibits him/her from attending the parent information class, counseling, mediation or a meeting with the custody evaluator, that party may attend a parent information class where he/she lives, and may also request to participate in the mediation by telephone, with the cost of the telephone call borne by the distant party.

Who can I call if I have any questions?

Call Rebekah Hays at the Guidance Center at (928) 714-5254 or Conciliation Court at (928) 779-6805.